

CHICAGO SUN-

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THIS IS ANOTHER IN A CONTINUING CHICAGO SUN-
PROBLEMS PRESIDENT REAGAN FACES AS HE ATTEMPT
DEFENSE PROGRAM.

"AMERICA'S DEFENSE STRENGTH IS AT ITS LOWEST
WHILE THE SOVIET UNION IS VASTLY OUTSPENDING
CONVENTIONAL ARMS."

-PRESIDENT REAGAN'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
AT THE 1980 GOP NATIONAL CONVENTION

By PATRICK OSTER

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WASHINGTON - ONE OF THE MAIN UNDERPINNINGS OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S
PLAN TO SPEND ABOUT A TRILLION AND A HALF DOLLARS ON HIS MILITARY
BUDGET IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS BASED ON QUESTIONABLE DATA.
THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID SUCH HUGE SUMS MUST BE SPENT PARTLY BECAUSE
THE SOVIETS ARE OUTSPENDING THE UNITED STATES BY NEARLY 3-1 ON
STRATEGIC WEAPONS AND BY 2-1 ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS.

AND DEFENSE SECRETARY CASPAR W. WEINBERGER, SEEKING TO JUSTIFY THE
ADMINISTRATION'S STAGGERING PROPOSALS FOR DEFENSE BUDGET INCREASES TO
CONGRESS, SAID THAT THE SOVIETS ARE OUTSPENDING THE UNITED STATES
OVER ALL IN DEFENSE BY 50 PERCENT.

THESE FIGURES ARE USED BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE RING OF AUTHORITY,
HAVING COME FROM AN ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SUCH SPENDING BY THE CIA.

BUT THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE METHODS THE CIA USES TO COMPUTE SUCH
COMPARISONS - AND THE CAVEATS THE AGENCY ITSELF PUTS ON ITS FIGURES
- BRING INTO QUESTION THE URGENCY AND NEED THE ADMINISTRATION SAYS
THERE IS TO CATCH UP WITH THE SOVIETS MILITARILY.

THE CIA ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ITS FIGURES MAY BE OFF BY 45 PERCENT
EITHER WAY. THUS, BY CIA CALCULATIONS, THE SOVIETS MAY BE OUTSPENDING
THE UNITED STATES ON DEFENSE BY ANYWHERE FROM 35 PERCENT TO 65
PERCENT. SIMILARLY, WHEN THE CIA CALCULATES U.S.-SOVIET DEFENSE
SPENDING IN SOVIET RUBLES RATHER THAN U.S. DOLLARS, IT FINDS THAT THE
SOVIETS ARE OUTSPENDING THE UNITED STATES BY 30 PERCENT - ABOUT HALF
THE FIGURE WEINBERGER USED.

THE CIA WARNS, TOO, THAT ITS FIGURES ONLY GIVE A MEASURE OF WHAT THE
UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION PUT INTO THEIR DEFENSE PROGRAMS;
NOT A MEASURE OF WHAT THOSE PROGRAMS PRODUCE.

"DOLLAR VALUATIONS," THE 1981 REPORT SAYS, STILL MEASURE INPUT
RATHER THAN OUTPUT AND SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A DIRECT MEASURE OF THE
RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF U.S. AND SOVIET FORCES.